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ABSTRACT

A study in Finland investigated the relationship of two general aspects of student motivation for second language learning (preference for challenge and curiosity) and motivation specific to the learning situation. Subjects were 292 sixth-graders and 301 eighth-graders, who performed two open and two closed English vocabulary tasks in two different learning situations, individual and cooperative. Students' pre- and post-task attitudes were elicited by questionnaire. Pre-task items measured how interesting, difficult, and curiosity-arousing the students saw the task, how competent they felt to do it, how eager to begin, and whether they expected to learn from it. Post-task items measured how students had persisted with and concentrated on the task, how satisfied they were with their performance, how interesting they had found it, and other feelings associated with their performance. A background questionnaire measured general motivational orientation (integrative, instrumental, and cognitive); attitudes toward group, method, and teacher; classroom motivational orientation; target language self-concept; cognitive and attributional styles; and learning situation preferences. Analysis of the results suggests that in studying foreign language learning motivation, both general and subject-specific motivation theories should be used. Additional research is recommended. A 30-item bibliography and the pre- and post-task questionnaires are appended. (MSE)

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GENERAL AND SITUATION-SPECIFIC MOTIVATION IN FL LEARNING

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This paper is based on a larger study "Situation- and task - specific motivation in foreign language learning and teaching", which investigated the relation between trait and state motivation (Julkunen 1989). The theoretical framework, the method, and the main results are here briefly presented and discussed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In foreign-language achievement motivation is generally considered to be the major single factor (e.g. Jakobovits 1970, Laine 1977, McDonough 1981). It has mainly been studied within the framework created by Gardner and Lambert (e.g. 1972; Gardner 1985), i.e. integrative and/or instrumental orientation towards the foreign language. The former refers to the learner's readiness to identify with the target culture and the latter covers the various benefits gained by studying a language.

The integrative/instrumental division has also been widely criticized. It has been pointed out that it has been over-generalized to circumstances that do not correspond to the bilingual situation where it was developed (e.g. Piepho

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1979, McDonough 1981, Au 1988, Dörnyei 1990a, Crookes & Schmidt 1991).

Laine (1978 and 1987a) has added intellectual curiosity as the third component of the general motivational orientation to learning a foreign language. Another trend that could expand the concept of foreing language learning motivation is the communication motive, which relies on the main function of language, i.e. communication between people (Apelt 1981, Laine 1987b).

In the classroom context motivation can be seen as a continuous interaction process between the learner and the environment (e.g. Solmecke 1983, Nuttin 1985). It can be conceptualized either as an impulse arising from the organism or as an attraction arising from an object outside the individual (Nuttin 1985). Motivation does not only affect the selection and conceptualization of a specific goal in the beginning of an activity. Its main role is in controlling and directing an activity. In directing and coordinating various operations towards an object (goal) motivation transforms a number of separate reactions into significant action. Learners build object-directed means-end structures, such as tasks, plans, projects, intentions, and interests (Nuttin 1976).

Harter's studies (Reported in Harter 1981) on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivational orientations in the classroom seemed to be particularly relevant for the present study: they focus on the classroom situation; they deal with developmental features of motivation; and they focus on pupils' preferences.

Harter (1981, 304) defines five separate dimensions of classroom learning with both an intrinsic and an extrinsic motivational pole: preference for challenge versus preference for easy tasks; learning motivated by curiosity/interest versus learning to please the teacher and getting good grades; independent mastery atempts versus dependence on the teacher for help; independent judgement (i.e. in deciding what to do) versus reliance on the teacher's judgement; and internal criteria for success or failure versus external criteria (e.g. teacher's feedback, marks, grades etc.).

Challenge and curiosity would seem to be the most relevant dimensions for the present study, because they are related to learning tasks. Further, criteria for success and failure are integral because in the tasks performed the subjects did not get any feedback from the teacher but they had to decide on success or failure independently. With age and accumulating school experience the criteria for success/failure will obviously lose significance in student learning.

Situation specific motivation refers to the motivational state in a given situation. According to Boekaerts (1987a, 1987b) the learner's general motivational orientation, motivation as a trait, and his/her situation specific motivation, motivation as a state, interact and produce the situation-specific action tendency (SiSAT), which denotes the learner's readiness to devote his/her personal resources, i.e. time, energy, competence etc, to completing a task (c.f. Maehr 1984). The content of situation specific action tendency is mainly determined by appraisal processes. Appraisal processes categorize encounters, tasks etc. with respect to their sinificance to an individual's well-being. (see Figure 1.)

Although the above appraisal processes are primarily associated with stressful encounters where an individual`s well-being is threatened, Boekaerts (1987b) assumes that the framework can be applied to learning situations as well. In fact, foreign language learning offers threatening and anxiety-provoking situations, especially to low achieving students. In the classroom context the appraisal processes are biased; i.e. each learner has had different learning experiences and has learnt to classify learning situations, tasks, activities, content areas, and even school subjects in different ways. High and low achievers have their characteristic appraisals, and there are also age-related differences (Boekaerts 1987b, cf. also Maehr 1984, 123).

As stated above, the student`s general motivational orientation (instrumental, integrative, and cognitive) and state motivation are expected to interact and produce the situation specific action tendency (SiSAT). State motivation, in turn, is affected by the learner`s cognitive abilities (competence), task demands (as perceived and conceptualized by the learner), and his/her emotional states before task performance. As a result, the learner has a notion of the attractiveness, difficulty level, personal significance, own competence in relation to the task, and his/her eagerness to participate in the activity. After task performance the learner assesses his/her performance (result assessment), and attributes success or failure to ability, luck, task difficulty, effort etc. (Boekaerts 1987a, 1987b).

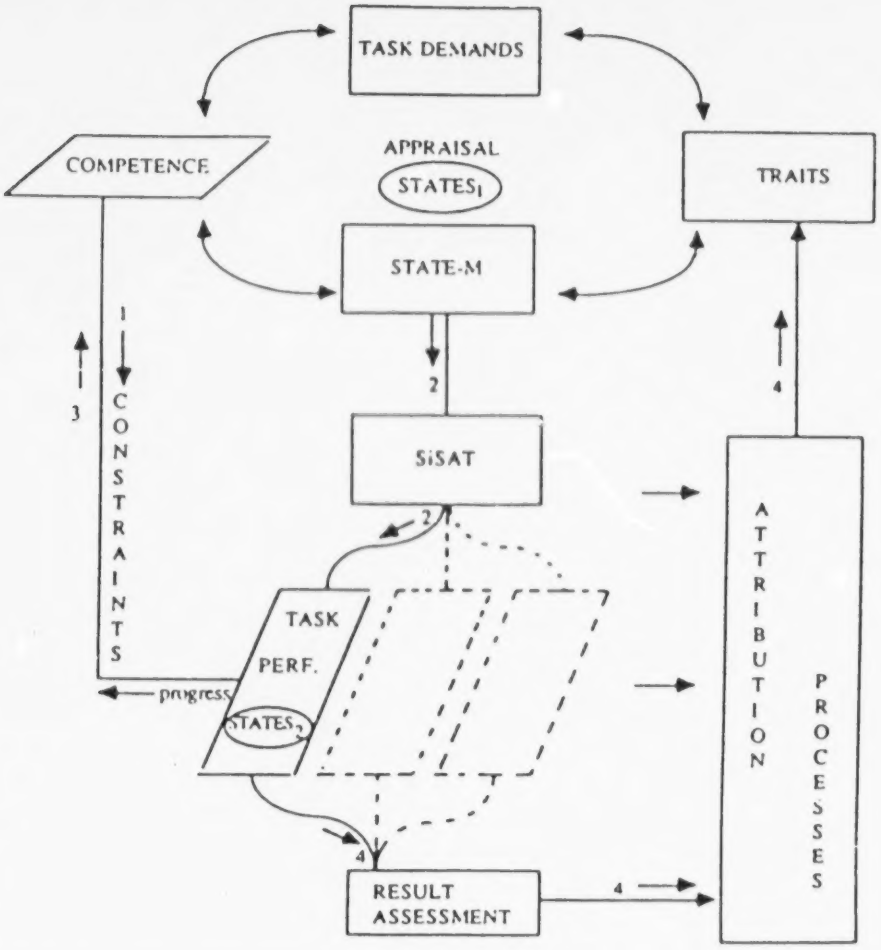

Figure 1. Boekaerts`s Conceptual Model (Boekaerts 1988, 271)

When task characteristics are the focus of attention in situation specific motivation, the term task motivation ca be used. Gagné (1985, 307) views task motivation as one of the major types of motivation (the others being incentive and achievement motivation). Referring to Ausubel (1968) he notes that the motives are intrinsic to the task, and the completion of the task satisfies the underlying motive. Task motivation refers to the characteristics of the task, to task design. Maehr (1984,137) points out that certain tasks are more interesting, more attractive, and more motivating than others. Tasks that include an optimal amount of uncertainty and unpredictability attract the learner. Language games are a point in case.

The above implies that situation or task level motivation should ideally be studied in three stages: the initial stage, the actual performance stage, and the evaluation stage (cf. Hennig 1978, Nuttin 1985, Boekaerts 1987a and 1988, Winne 1987).

METHOD

The subjects of the study consisted of 292 sixth-graders (aged 12) and 301 eighth-graders (aged 14) from nine comprehensive schools in Joensuu, Finland. The students performed two open (Categories) and two closed (Three of a Kind) English vocabulary tasks in two different learning situations (individualistic and cooperative). The students' pre- and post-task appraisals and attributions were recorded by means of an on-line motivation questionnaire (state motivation) immediately before and after each vocabulary task. A separate background questionnaire was administered to measure the students' general motivational orientation and other relevant dispositional characteristics (traits). The students' school marks in English served as indicators of domain-specific competence.

Principal component analysis was performed on the motivational orientation data. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to find out how much the motivational orientation and the situation specific motivation accounted for the variance in students' situation specific action tendency (SiSAT).

The on-line motivation questionnaire (Appendix 1) consists of 12 pre-task and 10 post-task statements to which the pupils had to respond on a five-point scale, indicating the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement. The

purpose of the pre-task items was to find out how interesting/attractive, difficult and curiosity arousing the pupils find the task; how competent they feel themselves to do the task; how eager they are to begin the task; and whether they expect to learn from the task (relevance in the school context). These items compose state motivation (STATE-M). Further, they had to indicate how anxious, glad, distressed, sad, and angry they felt before the task, which refer to students' emotional states (STATES 1). Finally, they had to show how prepared they were to invest their time and skills in the task at hand (situation specific action tendency = SiSAT), i.e. the outcome of their appraisal processes.

The post-task items measured how the pupils had managed to persist with the task and how well they had concentrated on the task (realized SiSAT) ; how satisfied they were with their performance; and how interesting they had found the task. Further they indicated how glad, excited-/anxious/tense, satisfied, angry, disstressed, and proud they felt after their performance. Finally, they had to indicate whether they had succeeded in the task(result assessment), and then respond to five attribution items (attributional processes). Ability, effort, luck, difficulty level and attractiveness of the task as well as pleasant or unpleasant feeling during the task completion were included in the attribution scale.

The main body of the background questionnaire consists of 102 five-point scales of a Likert-type. The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure the subjects' general motivational orientation (integrative, instrumental, and cognitive), attitudes toward the target groups and toward the teaching method and the teacher, and the classroom level motivational orientation, their target language self concepts (c.f. Boekaerts 1991), their cognitive and

attributional styles as well as their preferences relating to different learning situations. The background questionnaire relates to the traits in the conceptual model.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Students' general FL motivational orientation was divided into eight factors. The eight-factor solution is rational and can be related to the theoretical framework of the study. Factor 1 covers the three major motives or motivational orientations, i.e. integrative, instrumental, and cognitive (see Gardner & Lambert 1972, Laine 1987a and b). The factor was named communicative orientation (or communicative motive) as the main function of language as means of communication seems to be the underlying element (cf. Apelt 1981).

The second factor represents classroom level intrinsic motivation (e.g. Harter 1981) while the third factor refers to the teacher and the teaching method (cf. Apelt 1981 and Laine 1987b). Factor 4, integrative orientation, refers to positive cultural attitudes and willingness to become a member of the target community (see e.g. Laine 1987b). Factors 5 and 6, helplessness and anxiety, are not necessarily very language specific but are common to all learning situations. Factor 7, internal criteria for success/failure corresponds to Harter's (1981) ideas. The last factor, latent interest in English has been extracted earlier (e.g. Laine 1978 and Julkunen 1985). The eight factor solution accounted for 53.5 per cent of the total variance.

The comparison of sixth- and eighth-graders showed that the teacher/method motivation has a more significant role to play in the former group. They were also more intrinsically

motivated while the latter had better developed internal criteria for success/failure (cf. Harter 1981). On the whole, the sixth-graders had a higher motivation than the eighth-graders.

As might have been expected, the high achievers were more motivated in almost all the factors than the low achievers. Naturally enough, the latter were more anxious and felt more helpless than the former. It is worth noticing that there was no statistically significant difference in the integrative motivation and that the low-achieving students were latently more interested in studying English than the high-achieving students.

Students' Background characteristics and Situational Motivation

A number of stepwise multiple regression analyses were performed on the data in order to find out which background and situation specific factors account for the variance in situation specific action tendency (SiSAT). As the number of possibly relevant variables was quite large, the analyses were performed in three stages. First, the background variables were used as predictors of SiSAT. Second, state motivation and motivational states involved in pre-task appraisal processes were used as predictor variables, and , finally, the most powerful backgroung and situational variables were included in the analysis.

The teacher/method motive was the best predictor of students' situation specific action tendency in two tasks, explaining 13 per cent of the variance. Moreover, it was the second best predictor in two other tasks. Intrinsic motivation had the major role in Categories 1 and Three of a kind 2, and it took the second place in Categories 2.

Communicative orientation entered the regression equation as second variable in Three of a kind 1. The result seems to underline the role of the teacher, the method and learning materials in language teaching. The results relating to age and sex seem to support the results obtained in motivation research, i.e. girls and younger students are more motivated than boys and older students.

The principal predictors explained 13 to 14 per cent of the variance in SiSAT and total percentages varied from 19 to 22.

State motivation and emotional states in situation specific action tendency

The eagerness, relevance, attractiveness, and curiosity components of the student's state motivation as well as the emotional states anger, anxiety, and gladness entered the regression equations, which explained 50 to 59 per cent of the variance in SiSAT in the four tasks. Students' eagerness to begin with the task was the major predictor of SiSAT in all tasks. Task relevance entered the equations in the second step in all tasks.

The combined role of students' background characteristics, state motivation and emotional states in situation specific action tendency

When both the relevant background variables and situational variables served as predictors of SiSAT, state motivation, represented here by eagerness, relevance, attractiveness, and curiosity, account for most of the variance in students' situation specific action tendency in all tasks. The impor-

tance of situational factors is further emphasized by emotional states (cf. Boeakaerts 1986b, 1987c and 1988).

The significance of situational factors in FL learning motivation is further supported by the fact that the background variables that entered the regression equation varied task by task. No task- or situation-related pattern could be established. Part of this variation could result from the properties of the on-line questionnaire, i.e. the situation specific action tendency should have had more items.

The four regression models explained 48 to 59 per cent of the variance in students' situation specific action tendency. The figures are only slightly higher than those of the models in stage two of the analysis. This is, however, natural because background and situation specific factors are assumed to interact with each other. Consequently, they cannot be separated completely.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study suggest that in studying FL learning motivation, at least situation- and task-specific motivation, a working combination of general and subject specific theories can and should be used. One obvious reason for this is the fact that there seems to be a time lag between general psychological research and its eventual subject (FL) specific applications. Recently, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) have advocated the application of general theories of motivation to second/foreign language learning research. Moreover, the fact that the FL learning motivation theory, supplemented by FL application of Harter's classroom level intrinsic motivation, functioned quite well in the conceptual model supports the use of subject specific

theories when such a theory is available. Finally, the results of FL learning motivation would seem to imply that a new construct should be developed and tested. The main component of the new conceptualization would be the communication motive or communication orientation, which would then be supplemented by factors derived from the classroom context, e.g. teacher/method motive and classroom level motivational orientations.

On the other hand, it has to be born in mind that the present study only focuses on one aspect of FL learning, i.e. written vocabulary tasks. Oral communication tasks, for example, might have given different results (cf. Phillips 1992). Further, the instruments (Background questionnaire and On-line questionnaire) have to be developed. The SiSAT component of the on-line questionnaire needs more items. The results also suggest that item "I am eager to begin the task" overlaps with the SiSAT. On the whole, the motivation model developed by Boekaerts seems to function well. It provides an appropriate framework for research on learning materials and activities, e.g. for comparing the affective effects of different learning situations (individualistic, cooperative, competitive) and different tasks (open vs. closed).

Moreover, the fact that situational factors (State motivation and emotional states) accounted for most of the variance of situation specific action tendency seems to imply that what goes on in the classroom has a decisive role to play in FL learning (c.f. Dörnyei 1990b). This is further supported by the role played by the teacher/method motive and the classroom level intrinsic motivational orientation in the situation-specific action tendency (SiSAT).

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Appendix 1

On-line questionnaire

Name_____

Class_____

School_____

Questions before doing the task

Circle the number that best describes your opinion.

Note: 1= I definitely disagree
2= I quite disagree
3= I do not know
4= I quite agree
5= I definitely agree

Example

Travelling is fun	1	2	3	4	5

STATEMENTS

1. The task seems to be interesting	1	2	3	4	5
2. I think I can do the task					
3. I am eager to begin the task					
4. I expect to learn from the task					
5. I think the task is difficult for me					
6. I feel curious about the task					
7. I am anxious					
8. I am glad					
9. I am distressed					
10. I am sad					
11. I am angry					
12. I want to use my time and skills in doing the task.					

When you have done the task, circle the number that best describes your opinion.
Note: 1= I definitely disagree, 2= I quite disagree, 3= I do not know, 4= I quite agree, 5= I definitely agree.

STATEMENTS					
1. I persisted with the task	1	2	3	4	5
2. I concentrated on the task					
3. I am satisfied with my performance					
4. I am glad about my performance					
5. I am anxious					
6. I found the task interesting					
7. I am satisfied					
8. I feel angry about my performance					
10. I feel distressed about my performance					

Did you succeed in the task ? Yes____ No____
If your answer was Yes, complete the following:

I succeeded because of	1	2	3	4	5
competence					
effort					
luck					
easy task					
interesting task					
task enjoyment					

If your answer was No, complete the following:

I failed because of	1	2	3	4	5
lack of competence					
lack of effort					
bad luck					
difficult task					
stupid task					
task disenjoyment					